Central American NEWSLETTER

Newsletter of the Central American Group of the Spanish Main Society.

Editor: Bernard Davies, 16, Lynwood Close, Gordon Road, South Woodford, London E18 1DP 01-504-5042

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EDITORIAL

Our ability to maintain an eight-page quarterly on the republics of the Isthmus depends on the willingness of our readers to contribute articles, questions and comments. This point was made in our last Editorial, but so far the response has been nil, with the result that this edition came very near to being devoted to Nicaragua alone; such diversity as there is was achieved only by the Editor himself producing an article on Honduras, written in unseemly haste and no doubt therefore philatelically uncertain. We are always glad to have readers' comments, but we should particularly welcome further information on the subject-matter of this Honduras article in view of the circumstances of its production. We cannot stress too strongly that the success of this Newsletter is in your hands. The Editor can write on Nicaragua, Salvador and Honduras, and might even be able to produce a couple of short and shallow articles on Costa Rica; on Guatemala he will remain stonily silent. To maintain the quality and to give variety, please try to write something for us ON ANY OF THE ISTHMUS COUNTRIES. THIS MEANS YOU.

Our contemporary, the CHILE Newsletter, has decided to publish half-yearly, doubling the size of each issue. We have had no suggestion from members that our quarterly issues are too frequent, and while we accept the Chile management's arguments about avoiding clumsy serialisation of articles, we shall continue to publish QUARTERLY unless you tell us we are wrong.

Most of you have paid our £2 subscription. Will those who have not done so, please make good the omission? We agree with our Chile friends that it should have been £3, and it is therefore all the more important that the bargain-price of £2 reaches us from you all.

Mike Birks and I wish each and every one of you a HAPPY CHRISTMAS and a PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR. May your collections flourish!

Bernard Davies

CAUSERIE

501 Nicaragua Cartero markings. Bernard Davies possesses oval markings Cartero No 4 as illustrated (No 3) 1 p.m. Oct. 30 and Nov. 27 1904; and Cartero No 2 for 8 p.m. Nov. 25 - all three impressed in violet.

502 John Fosbery points out that neither date for the issue of Costa Rica 410-2 bears any relation to its actual occurrence, since the championships took place the preceeding year.

503 The "Estado de Nicaragua" label used as a seal remains a puzzle to us all. Leo Harris points out that it is an inscription found on Honduras revenues (i.e. "Estado de ....) but that he has never seen it on Nicaraguan stamps or labels.

504 Sometimes one does find very late usage of Nicaraguan stamps issued in the thirties or forties. The Editor can instance a 1962 registered cover to Zurich, franked with 5 x 60c SG1254 (1956), 2 x 10c SG1425, and 2 x 50c on 1 cordoba SG811 of 1933. Of course, it may simply be that the 1933 stamps are excess to the required rate; one can post old stamps of almost any country if they are surplus to the total postage needed. So this Managua to Zurich cover of 1962 may be no more than a philatelic curiosity.

505 Elucidation of Chris. Bettis' "Steamship 10" and "Guatemala City" covers comes from Dr Ross A Towle (who quotes a thorough and cogent description from "The American Stampless Cover Catalog"), from Jörg Maier (who lists similar correspondence from Valparaiso to New York) and from Dr Joseph F Rorke, who writes;

a) 1864 entire carried "by favor" from Guatemala to N.Y.C. (no postal markings). Received "Steamship 10" when placed into N.Y.P.O. - denoting 10c due for mail coming into the postal system other than by exact treaty specification.

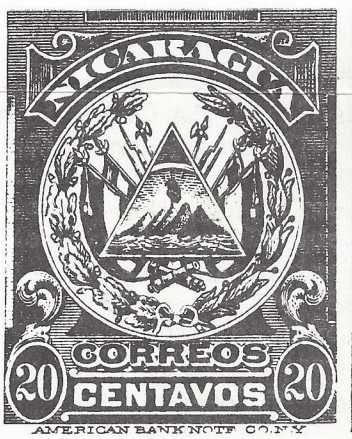
b) 1865 Guatemala cover was prepaid to US border - hence postmarked Guatemala City and franco. Received into US postal service at N.Y. when it received the same black steamship 10 due marking.

Dr Rorke states that these markings were used before 1871, Dr Towle gives the dates of usage as 1854-72.

Mike Birks adds that in the Gibbons New York sale of March 17th 1981, under 'Nicaragua', lot 248 is described as "25c Green (7;SG7), perfs, slightly in at top, tied, together with rouletted 5c Black (10;SG14), by "3/G" boxed cancel and "GRANADA" oval pmks. on fresh blue folded cover to U.S., N.Y. "STEAMSHIP 10" marking partially struck off cover, fine and rare combination Est $10 000-12 500" No indication of the date is given.

NEW CAUSERIE

601 John Fosbery invites comments on the sequence of ABN Co "Arms" stamps from 1905 (ABN Co) through 1907 (Waterlow) to 1909 (ABN Co). Other than a slight loss of detail he can see little difference in the Waterlow version, where he suggests the printing seems 'softer' and they may have taken some photo transfer to make the plates. The perfs. are of course different. As the loss of detail is not there in the 1909 set, John deduces that the ABN Co never parted with their work. The number printed do not seem all that large, so why was the order sent to Waterlow? An unpaid ABN Co account perhaps? Or perhaps someone in authority had been approached by Waterlow for a possible contract?



1905

1907

1909

SG 1308b

602 Mike Birks would like to suggest the listing of the illustrated variety "thick 'o' in 'Correos'", being of equal prominence to the listed variety Nicaragua SG308b "thin 's' in 'Correos'". (We send Gibbons catalogue department a copy of our Newsletters).

The East Coast of Nicaragua and its Postal Services

by Michael P. Birks

Parts 1 and 2 of this article appeared in Issues 4 and 5, and dealt with the transmission of the Greytown mails to and from Europe, by the Royal Mail Steam Ship Company's steamers.

The Transit

A further (albeit tenuous) aspect of Greytown's postal history, was brought about by its geographic location. As mentioned earlier, Cornelius Vanderbilt opened a transit route across the isthmus via Greytown. Since 1848, mail to the Californian goldfields had been carried via Panama, which was considerably quicker than by the overland route. Gordon's passenger line of New York was the first to attempt the Nicaraguan route, in February 1849. Poor organisation enabled Vanderbilt to step in, establishing a New York to San Francisco route via Nicaragua. The first steamers left New York in June 1851, and when established, enabled passengers to make the journey in about 21 days, the route being 500 miles shorter than the Panama route.

Initially mail carried via Nicaragua was charged at 6c per ½ ounce, this being raised to 10c per ½ ounce in 1855. Knowledge of these rates enables approximate dates to be allocated to undated covers. Much of the mail carried on Vanderbilts ships simply bears 'Via Nicaragua' in manuscript, or in block letters the words 'STEAM SHIP' or 'NEW YORK SHIP'. Some ships however, such as the 'Sullivan' and the 'Sierra Nevada' cacheted mail as illustrated in figures 1 (struck in black) and 2 (struck in blue). Figure 3, which was struck in red, probably belongs to the Nicaragua Steamship Line, but the origin of figure 4, which was struck in black, is unknown to me.

fig 1

fig 2

fig 3

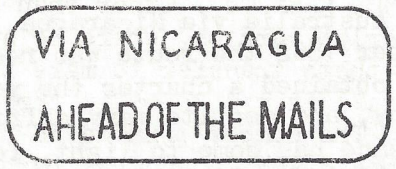


fig 4

These three cachets have all been recorded on covers out of New York, and it is possible that others exist as the two steamers were not the only ships employed on the line.

The first Western Express to make use of the Nicaraguan route was Gregory's California and New York Express, which advertised the service in October 1851. Delays in passenger conveyance were not uncommon, and so Gregory's advertisement stated that "A special Express Agent accompanies all our parcels direct to and from New York over the Isthmus, thereby avoiding the delays which result from any other arrangement".

Charles P. Kimball, known as 'Noisy Carrier' because of his loud voice, forwarded mail via Nicaragua, although other routes through Mexico and Panama were used. The cover bearing figure 5, which was applied in blue, gives no indication as to the route by which it travelled, and so may not have been carried via Nicaragua. Figure 6, again struck in blue, leaves no doubt as to its useage. Figure 7, struck in black, came into use towards the end of the transit era, and so was probably carried via Nicaragua.

Berford & Co's Express advertised a service by "splendid fast running steamer" accompanied by "A Special Messenger" to "take charge of our Express, Goods, Gold Dust etc., ... via Nicaragua, November 1st [1851] ..... Letters received .....". The company was bought out by Wells Fargo & Co. in June 1854.

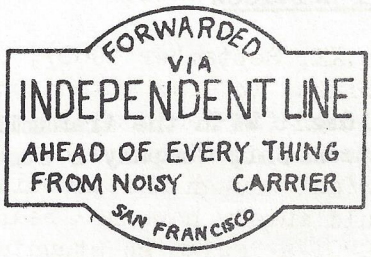


fig 5

fig 6

fig 7

Wine's & Co's Express, established in January 1855, operated a similar service to those already mentioned, from an agency in San Francisco. From 1857 they were responsible for the inland transmission of the Nicaraguan mail from the RMSP Co's vessels when they arrived at Greytown. This was accomplished via the Nicaraguan Post Office set up by their agent, Mr J.A. Ruggles, who operated from Granada. Letters originating in the Republic were charged at two hard reales per single letter "to beyond the Republic", and this included Greytown. Letters carried by this company via the transit bear an elliptical cachet inscribed in Spanish which I am unable to discern from my illustration, and so have not tried to reproduce here. The words 'DE NICARAGUA' in the upper part, and 'DE CORREOS' in the lower, are clear enough to indicate its relevance to this text.

The California Penny Post Company, incorporated at Sacramento on June 25th 1855, advertised "Prepaid envelopes ..... For the Atlantic States, via Nicaragua .....". Later letters were carried by this company for five cents in addition to the US postage. This fee could be paid by means of special adhesive stamps issued for this purpose, but later non-adhesive stamps were printed on envelopes, some of which had US government stamps impressed upon them. The exceeding rarity of these covers has meant that no example has come to light showing a routing via Nicaragua.

Vanderbilt's interest in railroads led to a neglect of the interests of the transit. His proposition to abandon the transit, and sell his ship the 'North Star', was accepted by the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, who were in competition with him for the US Government mail carrying contracts. The transit was abandoned early in 1857, and with it the carrying of the mails via Nicaragua. Two years later, in September 1859, the US announced that from October 5th, the US mails would again be carried via Nicaragua. This was a direct result of the awarding of a nine month contract to Daniel H. Johnson. However the announcement was premature, as the realities of the situation did not match Johnson's aspirations; Johnson had no ships and no means of securing any. Negotiations continued between the Nicaraguan government and various individuals, but to no avail. British representatives proposed the carrying of the Royal Mails to Australia via Nicaragua, but the plan never came to fruition.

Five years later, in October 1862 the route was reopened. The American Atlantic and Pacific Ship Canal Company had obtained a charter the year before, under the name of the Central American Transit Company, and despite many difficulties, managed to keep the route open until April 1868. No evidence has come to light, for or against, to show that mail was carried via Nicaragua between 1862 and 1868. May 10th 1869 saw the Golden Spike connecting the transcontinental railroad being driven home, and the need for the transisthmian route was no longer there.

Thoughts now turned to a transisthmian canal.

To be continued.

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Pioneer Ocean "Stage Coaches" - H.G.D. Gisburn - Gibbons Stamp Monthly, March 1949

The Transit;

The Nicaraguan Route - D.I. Folkman University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City, Utah. (recommended)

Ahead of the mails; Advance of the Mails- H.C. Needham & Dr V.M. Berthold - Collectors Club Philatelist

Some of the references listed on the left

HONDURAS: THE PAZ BARAONA 1c ISSUE OF 1925 - Bernard Davies

Brian Moorhouse's excellent article (Mainsheet, Vol. 6 No.XX, September 1980), on the blank clichés of the 1896 "Arias" issue serves, among other things, to draw attention to the extraordinary crudity of some of the productions of the Litografia Nacional in the period 1915-33. Italo Ghizzoni, the director of the printing works, who "found that the designs in some of the spaces (of the 1896 issue) were not perfect enough and immediately ordered the imperfect spaces to be scraped off the stones" would surely have had heart failure if he had seen the Gutiérrez ("Fried egg") issue of 1920, a design so stunningly primitive that an employee's production of a clandestine "inverted centre" might almost have passed unnoticed. The Paz Baraona issue of 1925 does not plumb these depths, but its appearance is sufficiently amateur to make a schoolboy collector wary - and with good reason, since forgeries abound. Nevertheless, this is an issue of considerable interest, and it is not at all difficult to distinguish the genuine from the counterfeit.

The issue commemorates the establishment of a government of the newly-formed National Party, combining Liberals with Conservatives, after a truce ended the revolt of Carias against Gutiérrez in 1924. The decree authorising the 1c stamp calls for 10,000 copies to be printed; dated 22nd January 1925 and signed Jose B Henriquez "El Secretario de Estado en el Despacho de Fomento, Obras Publicas y Agricultura", it does not indicate the colour in which the stamp is to be printed. Irving Green states that 400 sheets of 25 stamps (5 x 5) were printed; of the 10,000 stamps 6,500 were blue; 3,000 carmine; 50 green; 50 brick-red; and 400 brown. He suggests that the printers tried out these various colours and that most (if not all) of the imperforate stamps were originally intended as proofs - but they seem to have been included in the total of 10,000. The present writer does not recall that Green states the proportion of perforate to imperforate copies, but if catalogue prices are determined by relative scarcity (as they surely must be) there must be about twice as many perforate blue copies as imperforate blue copies; with the carmine the proportion must be rather similar to this; with the brown and buff stamps, the imperforate copies appear to be slightly in the majority; while the scarcity of the green and brick-red stamps appears to be identical perforate or imperforate. The catalogues have a field day with the plethora of colours. Minkus, claiming that "the colours of the parties - National, blue; Liberal, red; Conservative, green - were used in the issue", logically enough lists these three basic colours, but is then forced to count "brown drab" as well as "brick-red" as a variety of the basic "deep carmine". Gibbons count six colours: blue, carmine, olive-brown, buff, red and green. Scott in effect use the same as Gibbons, but give "a" numbers to "dark blue", "brown carmine", "orange brown", "dark brown" and "black brown". Not bad from 10,000 stamps!

There are various ways in which the forgeries can be identified. The clearest seems to be that the genuine stamps have clear and regular lines (formed by a sequence of dots) right the way across the forehand of the portrait. In the forgeries, these lines break up; often the delineation of the eyes lacks clarity; and most of the forgeries have white patches amid the lines in the oval background to the portrait, with other lack of precision in the detail of the design. The following points also help in some instances;-

i) Gum on the genuine is greyish; on the forgeries, generally white or cream
ii) The perforated genuine are perf. 11½ with rough teeth; the forgeries tend to separate less roughly.
iii) The imperforate genuine normally have a thin guide-line outside the frame
iv) The paper differs. The genuine is printed on poor quality, whitish paper, with an even surface and very fine mesh. (A complication if one relies on this test is that Irving Green mentions two other sorts of paper in use for genuine items - a rough paper, which the passage of time has made to seem not unlike wrapping paper, and on which preliminary proofs were taken; and a very smooth white paper with a regular mesh, on which proofs in various colours were taken.)
v) The addition of faked postmarks and slogans - e.g. a larger than normal HONDURAS in lines; a slogan "NO HAY LIBERTAD SIN EDUCACION ....".
vi) Colours differing from even the generous range listed in the catalogues; e.g. a bright green instead of the genuine sage-green; an orange rather than a brown shade; a pinkish tinge of brown; a rather watery blue; etc.

The writer is uncertain about the origin of these forgeries. Most of them could be consistent with private enterprise on the part of the printers - use of worn plates, different (and weaker) mixes of the same inks, etc. Such clandestine efforts were not unknown, as witness the inverted centre creation referred to earlier in this article, or the clandestine switch of the colours of the two values of the Pres. Colindres issue of 1929, or even the tête-bêche forgery of the 1933 Day of the Race issue. The views of readers would be welcomed, as would any further suggestions for distinguishing the genuine from the counterfeit.

NICARAGUAN TOWNS

(Taken from "Etude Economique Sur La Republique de Nicaragua" by Désiré Pector, Nicaraguan Consul in Paris; published about 1892-3.)

In most cases town names are followed by department name and town's population.

P = Post Office T = Telegraph Office RR = Rail Road

Achuapa - (Leon, 280)

T Acoyapa - (Chontales, 6 000)

Alta Gracia or Pueblo Grande - (Rivas, 4 000)

P T America (Ciudad) - (San Juan del Norte, 900) - Town started 1st January 1890, to be the eastern terminus of the inter-ocean canal.

T RR Amoya - shop town on the Momotombo-Corinto RR near Corinto.

P T Belen or Belem - (Rivas, 4 000) - Former name was Obraj.

P Bluefields - Capital of the Mosquito Reservation, governed by a King (Robert Clarence, 1891) aided by a Secretary of State, both of whom live at Laguna de Perlas. At Bluefields are three magistrates and the police force; also a Nicaraguan Commissioner-General with jurisdiction over all the reservation as well as Corn Island and Siquia, who sees that the reservation authorities render justice to Nicaraguans and foreigners. Bluefields is in comminication with San Juan del Norte, Rama, Laguna de Perlas, Rio Grande, Wonta and Cabo de Gracias a Dios by the steamer "Presidente Carazo" subsidized by the Nicaraguan government; 4 or 5 trips per month. New Orleans steamers, "Agnes", "Anita", "Nicaragua" and "John Wilson" of the Bluefields Banana Co, are routed via Kingston; "Gussie" and "Harlan" of the Morgan Line direct from New Orleans. Since 1887 a Nicaraguan Bureau of Posts has operated at Bluefields; it depends on the one at San Juan del Norte.

P T Bosco - (Chontales) - agriculture and gold mines.

P T Buenos Aires - (Rivas, 2 000)

Cabo Gracias a Dios - Capital of the region of the same name. Governed by an Inspector-General. The Nicaraguan Government several years prior to 1892 established a monthly mail and passenger service between San Juan del Norte and Cabo Gracias by the steamer "Presidente Carazo".

T Camoapa - (Chontales)

Carballo, valle de - (Masaya, 1 200)

P T Castillo viejo, el - (Chomtales) - River port on the San Juan River midway between San Juan del Norte and San Carlos. Special customs bureau for merchandise arriving from the exterior via San Juan and directed to the departments of Granada, Chomtales and Rivas. The bureau is established to overcome smuggling. It is one of the great strategic spots of the country. This great fortress (Old Fort San Juan de Dios, rebuilt in 1727) occupied by the guard, a Catholic Chapel and by the customs, telegraph and postal bureaus stands atop a pyramidal hill and gives its name to the rapids. The steamship company of the San Juan River owns two warehouses here for storing goods.

Catarina - village between Masaya and Diriomo.

T RR Chichigalpa - (Chinandega, 2 500) - on the RR between Chinandega and Posoltega.

PTRR Chinandega - (Chinandega, 18 000) - on the RR between Chichigalpa and Corinto,

T Ciudad Antigua - (Nueva Segovia, 607 in 1888)

Cofradias, caserio de - (Masaya, 522 in 1888)

T Comalapa - (Chontales)

Concepcion, la - (Prinzapolca)

T Condega - (Esteli, 4 420 in 1888)

P T Corinto - (Chinandega, 2 500) - the best Nicaraguan port on the Pacific Coast. Terminus of the National Railroad (Corinto-Momotombo) passing through Chinandega, Chichigalpa and Leon.

Corn Island, Big - (1 000, mostly creoles, and negroes; measures about 2½ x 2 miles; under jurisdiction of the governor of the district of Siquia residing at either Bluefilds or at San Juan del Norte)

Corn Island, Little - (about 1½ x 1 miles)

Cuicuina - (Prinzapolca, 300)

Dipilto - (Nueva Segovia, 605 in 1888) - silver mining territory.

T Diriamba - (Carazo) - sugar plantation country.

Diriomo - (Granada)

Diria or San Juan Diria - (Granada)

Dos Bocas - (Matagalpa) - Name change to San Pedro del Norte in 1892.

RR Esperanza, la - RR station between Managua and Masaya.

Esquiputas - (Esteli, 8 300 in 1888)

P T Granada - (Granada, 21 116) - chief port of Lake Nicaragua. Steamship "Victoria" leaves 1st., 10th. and 20th of each month for San Jorge, Moyogalpa, San Ubaldo and San Carlos. Four mule stagecoaches leave every two days for Rivas with a stop at Nandaime; the trip takes a day and a half.

Jalapa - (Nueva Segovia, 1 506 in 1888)

Jicaral - (Leon, 614)

Jicaro - (Nueva Segovia, 1 679 in 1888)

P T Jinotega - (Jinotega, 10 000) cattle country.

P T Jinotepe - (Carazo, 5 000) - coffee and sugar cane.

P T Juigalpa - (Chontales, 3 000 in 1889)

T La Libertad - (Chontales, 2 500 in 1889) - gold mining.

T RR La Paz or Pueblo Nuevo - (Leon, 1831) - dyes and pottery. RR station between Moabita and Momotombo.

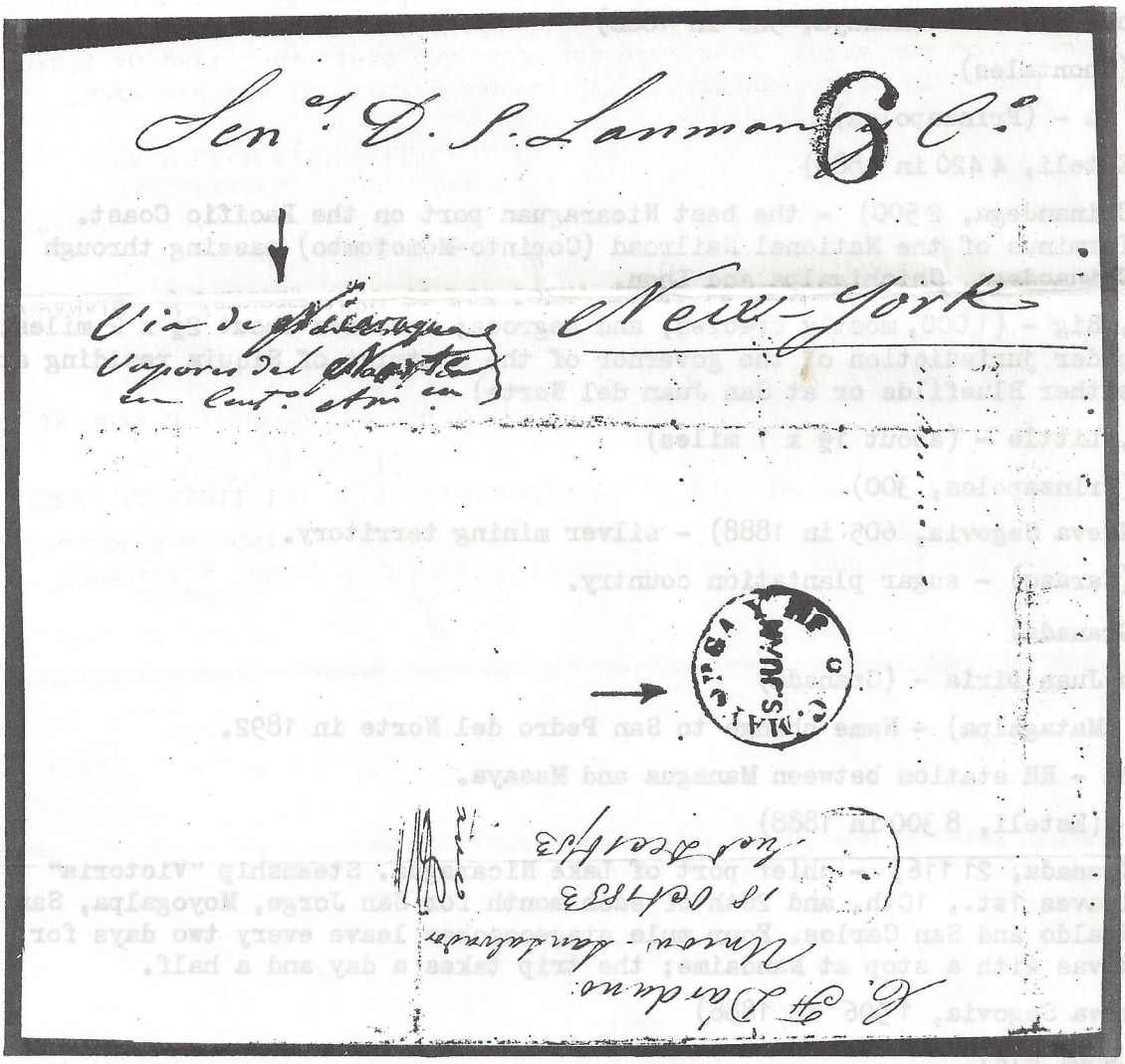
Leon - (Leon, 45 000) - the largest town in this list; compare Managua's 27 000 in 1891.

The second half of this list will be published in our next issue - Ed.

Brian Moorhouse, our Chairman, PO Box 3, BOURNE PE10 9RF, can offer an interesting Xerox of a map of a projected inter-state/trans-continental railway through the Central American isthmus. Seven pages with the route coloured in. Price £1.

Mike Birks, 89 Dunster Drive, URMSTON M31 3WR, can offer copies of Stroub's 'epic' work, 'Nicaragua', 54 A4 sides for £3 inclusive.

NICARAGUA: FORWARDING AGENTS by John Fosbery



The cover illustrated on the left was recently acquired by our friend, Kilian Nathan, who sent a photostat for my comments.

The cover appears to have started in LA UNION (El Salvador) and then travelled down the Pacific Coast to SAN JUAN del SUR in Nicaragua. Here it appears to have been handled by a forwarding agent who applied his circular hand-stamp "C. MAYORGA Y H S. JUAN" and then forwarded it via "Vapores del Norte" to New York where it was charged '6' cents on its arrival. From the sales tariff sent by this cover, the date of despatch is 15 January 1853.

Forwarding agents markings on Nicaraguan correspondence are rare. Those in the Nathan collection include;-

LEON 14 April 1861 with manuscript "Forwarded by Dr J W Livingston"; received in New York 14 May 1861.

SAN JUAN del NORTE. 18 May 1867 with "C A T Co SAN JUAN DEL NORTE", a circular steel handstamp dated 28 May 1867. "C A T Co" denotes "Central American Transit Company". The letter arrived in New York on 6 June 1867 per S S "Nevada".

GRANADA 5 January 1870 to New York, where it arrived on 26 January, and where it collected an oval handstamp "C DURAND, NEW YORK".

GRANADA Letters dated 8 November 1872 and 6 April 1876 both to New York, arriving respectively 6 December 1872 and 8 May 1876; both show an oval handstamp "W P MAAL ASPINWALL".

There are two forwarding agents for Nicaragua listed by Kenneth Rowe in his "Forwarding Agents"; in part 1 he lists SAN JUAN del SUR. Body, White and Co in an oval; date 1852 but size and colour are not mentioned; in part II is listed SAN JUAN del NORTE. A L Belchier in manuscript in 1851 and also an oval mark (41 x 15) also in 1851. Kilian Nathan has seen neither of these marks.

An oval handstamp in black (33 x 17mm) is listed in Rowe's Part I for Aspinwall for W P MALI with a date of 1869.

LISTINGS OF OTHER FORWARDING AGENTS ON NICARAGUAN CORRESPONDENCE ARE INVITED FROM OUR READERS.